REMARKS

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's thorough examination of this application, and allowance of Claims 1-3.

Claims 1-38 are pending in this application, of which Claims 1-3 are allowed, Claims 4-35, 37 and 38 are rejected, and Claim 36 is objected to. Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejections. Further examination and review in view of the remarks provided below are respectfully requested.

In the non-final Office Action dated November 19, 2003, the examiner allowed Claims 1-3; rejected Claims 4-18, 20, 21, 24-35, 37, and 38 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Kumar et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0042756 A1); rejected Claims 19 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kumar et al. in view of Lin et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0077919 A1); rejected Claim 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kumar et al. in view of Knorr et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0077929 A1); and objected to Claim 36 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim.

Applicant's techniques are directed to providing availability information for bundle items that are made up of two or more constituent items. When the inventory for a constituent item changes, all bundle items that contain the constituent item are identified and added to a list containing changed bundle items unless a particular bundle item is already on the list. The bundle items in this list are removed and its availability information updated based upon the inventory information for the constituent items that make up the bundle item. Thus, in applicant's techniques, the list is used to obtain a redetermination of the availability of bundle items and the redetermination of a particular bundle item is based upon the inventory of the items that that make up the bundle item.

Claims 4-18, 20, 21, 24-35, 37, and 38 stand rejected over Kumar et al, either alone or in combination with either Lin et al. or Knorr et al. Kumar et al. describes a fulfillment management system for managing product data in a distributed supply chain environment. A client submits a product request to the management system, which in turn brokers the product request to one or more sellers in the form of component

requests. The management system receives component quotations or component promises from the sellers and combines them to generate a unified quotation, which is sent to the client for review. Here, the management system sends the request for a product or a component to a seller and bases the product or component availability on the response provided by the seller to the management system. The management system also provides a queue that is used to obtain new quotations. For example, the client or the management system can submit a product request for requoting by placing the product request into the queue.

With reference to Claims 4-9 and 13, each of the claims includes the common feature of adding to a list an item group that contains an item whose availability status changes if the item group is not already present in the list, and determining the availability status for the item group based upon availability statuses of the items contained in the item group.

Claims 4-9 and 13 stand rejected over Kumar et al. In rejecting the claims, the Examiner indicated that "an addition, a modification, and a removal of availability of the product" and "updating the product availability information associated with the desired product in the database" as recited in claims 18 and 24 of Kumar et al., respectively, corresponds to the provision of adding to a list an item group that contains an item whose availability status changes if the item group is not already present in the list. The Examiner also indicated that the "queue" disclosed in paragraphs 159-161 of Kumar et al. corresponds to the list containing the item groups.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner. The cited reference of Kumar et al. has nothing to do with determining the availability status for item groups that contain one or more items. In Kumar et al., a database stores one or more supply vectors that identify when one or more quantities of a product have become or will become available for a client. This information is used to generate a component quotation for a request for that product. (Page 20, paragraph 191). Furthermore, the queue disclosed by Kumar et al. is utilized for maintaining client requests that are periodically submitted for requoting with the intent of improving the quotation result. This queuing process does not affect any existing promise but simply results in a new

quotation. Thus, in the cited reference, the availability status is determined for a single product and the queue is used to obtain requotes. In contrast, in Applicant's application, the availability status is determined for item groups and the list is used to obtain the availability status of item groups. Finally, Kumar et al. fails to disclose, suggest or teach the feature of ensuring that at most one instance of an item group is present in the list at any one point in time.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of Claims 4 and 13. Furthermore, Claims 5-9 depend from Claim 4 and are therefore allowable on the same basis as Claim 4.

With reference to Claims 10-12, 24-35, 37 and 38, each of the claims includes the common feature of identifying item groups that contain an item whose availability changes, and determining the availability for the item group based upon availability of the items contained in the item group.

Claims 10-12, 24-35, 37 and 38 stand rejected over Kumar et al. In rejecting Claims 10-12, the Examiner indicated that a user selecting one or more products and logically grouping the products or line-items for shipment scheduling purposes (page 6, paragraph 50-52) corresponds to the provision of selecting an item group containing the item whose availability changes. The Examiner also indicated that a component quotation, which includes product availability information, and which is computed after evaluating availability of the component corresponds to the provision of determining the availability for the item group based upon the availability of the items contained in the group.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner. In the cited reference of Kumar et al., the logical grouping of products is for the purpose of shipment scheduling, and the component availability information is used to formulate a component quotation. This is in stark contrast to item groups that contain items, and for using the availability of the items contained in the item group to determine the availability of the item group.

In rejecting Claims 24-35 and 37, the Examiner indicated that relating multiple items to the same product in order to permit the modeling of multiple suppliers for the

same product (pages 3, paragraph 31) corresponds to the provision of detecting changes to the availability information of individual items. The Examiner also indicated that resubmitting a queued component request for quotation (see paragraph 161), accounting for component promise changes in any pending quotation (see paragraph 163), accounting for changes in production plans (see paragraph 164), identifying planning changes affecting the promise characteristics of component requests (see paragraph 166), and determining whether an event impacted the integrity of a promise (see paragraph 169) corresponds to the provision of updating the availability information of group items containing the individual items using the current availability information of the individual items.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner. In the cited reference of Kumar et al., multiple items are grouped into a single product in order to model multiple suppliers of the same product, and this is very different from grouping multiple items into a single product in order to determine the availability of the single product based upon the availability of each of the multiple items that are grouped in the single product. Furthermore, resubmitting a queued component request for quotation and accounting for changes that may affect the quotation is starkly different than Applicant's technique of determining the availability for an item group based upon availability of the items contained in the item group.

In rejecting Claim 38, the Examiner indicated that a line-item grouping, which is a logical grouping of multiple request line-items for delivery coordination, corresponds to the provision of identifying group items that contain individual items whose availability information changed. The Examiner also indicated that order quantity requirements for each product that is used as a factor in generating a failure response to a requesting client corresponds to the provision of updating availability information for group items using the current availability information for each of the individual items contained by the group.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner. In the cited reference to Kumar et al., the logical grouping is to coordinate delivery of items that must ship together. Stated another way, the purpose of the grouping in Kumar et al. is for delivery

coordination, while the grouping in Applicant's technique is to identify groups for redetermination of availability based on changes to the availability of individual items in the group. Furthermore, using quantity requirements to generate a failure response, as disclosed by Kumar et al., is starkly different than Applicant's technique of using current availability information for individual items to update availability information of group items that contain the individual items.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of Claims 10, 24 and 38. Furthermore, Claims 11 and 12, and 25-35 and 37 depend from Claims 10 and 24, respectively, and are therefore allowable on the same basis as Claims 10 and 24.

Applicant also respectfully requests allowance of Claim 36 in its present form because it depends from an allowable independent Claim 24.

With reference to Claims 14-23, each of the claims includes the common feature of a data structure that comprises information identifying a bundle containing an item whose availability has changed since the availability of the bundle was last computed, and that may be used to select bundles of items for recomputation of their availability.

Claims 14-23 stand rejected over Kumar et al., either alone or in combination with either Lin et al. or Knorr et al. In making the rejection, the Examiner indicated that computing a component quotation after evaluating availability corresponds to information identifying a bundle containing an item whose availability has changed since the availability of the bundle was last computed. (page 11, paragraph 85).

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner. In cited reference of Kumar et al., availability is evaluated to compute a component quotation that includes product availability information. This implies that component availability is used to form a component quotation. This is different from Applicant's technique of using availability of an item to determine the availability of bundles of items that contain the particular item. Thus, the cited reference cannot possibly disclose, suggest or teach the data structure that comprises information identifying a bundle containing an item whose availability has changed since the availability of the bundle was last computed.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of Claim 14. Furthermore, Claims 15-23 depend from Claim 14 and are therefore allowable on the same basis as Claim 14.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 4-38 are allowable and asks that this application be passed to allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-8000.

Respectfully submitted,
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